NEWS — GOVERNMENT

CPA, school facilities plan, water rates pass Town Meeting in landslide votes

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

May 3, 2024 . 6:00 AM — 5 min read

Conservation Commission Chair David Miller talks about possible project ideas for the town should the CPA be adopted in November. WINCHESTER STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

The first hurdle in the passage of the Community Preservation A
cleared Thursday night as Town Meeting voted overwhelmingly 1

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place the measure on the ballot in November.

The town's adoption of the Community Preservation Act — a state law passed in 2000 that enables Bay State communities to raise funds for open space, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation/open space — could potentially generate additional revenue to help address its structural deficit and fund capital projects through a surcharge tax and state-matching funds.

If approved by voters at the Nov. 5 election, the projected CPA revenue to be raised at a 1.5% surcharge is $1.53 million in its first year. The estimated 20% state match is $306,259, based on the most recent match.

So far, 196 communities across the state have adopted the CPA. None have voted to repeal the measure.

"It's a game changer for the community," said Conservation Commission Chair David Miller, speaking to what the measure could do for open space and recreation in Winchester.

Miller was joined in support of the article by many of the town's other boards, including the School Committee, Planning Board, Council on Aging, Housing Partnership, Historical Commission, Affordable Housing Trust, Capital Planning Committee, Climate Action Advisory Committee and the Field Management Committee.

Select Board member Michael Bettencourt said Winchester has been in a cycle of deferring certain projects around the community when other higher priorities appear. The problem, he pointed out, is that costs for those deferred items continue to rise and the issues get worse over time.

"This will fund a lot of important things for the community," Bet
said.

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Residents questioned what the list of priorities currently is and just how much money the town is looking at with the CPA.

It is estimated that in its first five years, the CPA will bring in about $8.4 million in surcharge fees and about $1.3 million from the state, with a 20% match by the state. Had Winchester adopted the CPA 10 years ago, the town would have brought in $13 million in surcharge fees and $3 million in state matches.

Bettencourt added Winchester officials have put together a spreadsheet identifying all the projects that need to be done and possible funding sources.

“It’s very detailed and it helps with the capital strategy,” Bettencourt said, of the spreadsheet.

A motion was then made by Carol Savage to postpone the vote until Town Meeting could take up Article 10, which would create the Winchester Committee for Community Preservation (WCCP) to oversee the CPA.

“If approved, the money will come in in 2026,” one resident said, urging residents to deny the motion and support the CPA. “The longer we delay Article 9, the longer it will take for the money to come in.”

Savage’s motion failed, with residents taking the final vote, which ended with 132 in the affirmative, 21 in the negative and 2 abstentions.

The town will now place the CPA on the ballot for the Nov. 5 general election.

EFPBC master plan

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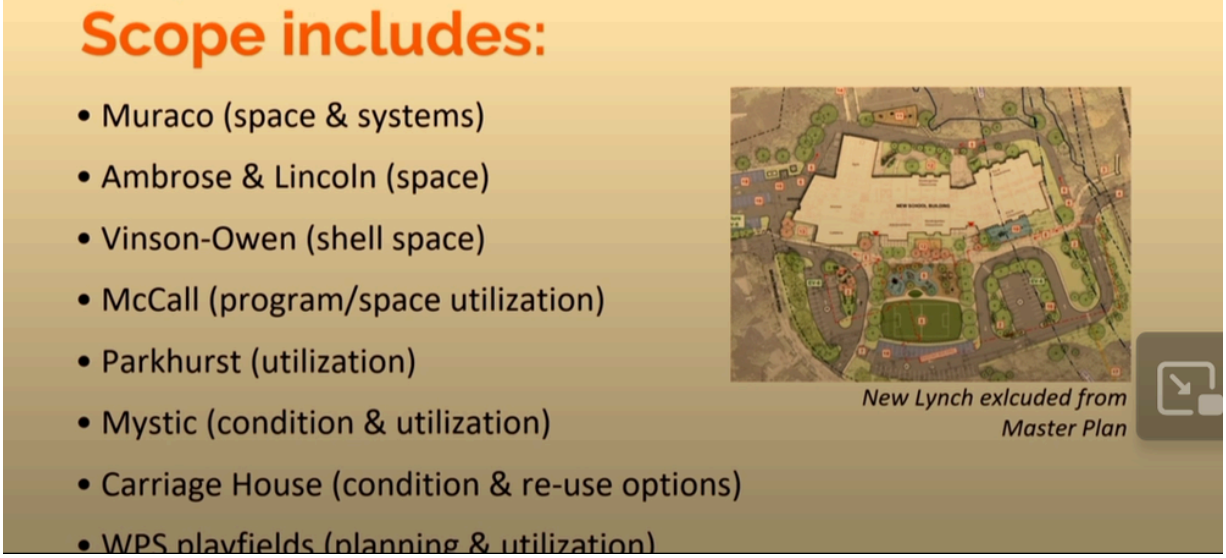
Town Meeting also voted 130-20, with two abstentions to transfer $145,000 from free cash for a new 10-year facilities master plan.



The EFPBC facilities master plan will look at all the school system's properties and what they could be used for. WINCHESTER STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

Chris Nixon, co-chair of the Educational Facilities Planning & Building Committee, said the current master plan is eight years old, having been passed in 2016-17. He said the plan takes a broad look at the school system and helps in creating the vision of where Winchester is heading.

The plan will be especially helpful in figuring out the upcoming Muraco School project.

Precinct 6 member Brenda Mandile questioned how the master plan would help Muraco with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

“The MSBA cares a lot about the record of the community willing to partner with them,” Nixon said. “It matters when the MSBA enters into a feasibility study and sets aside tens of millions of dollars in hopes of moving forward.

Winchester, he added, has a record of working with the MSBA on successful school projects, the latest of which is the Lynch.

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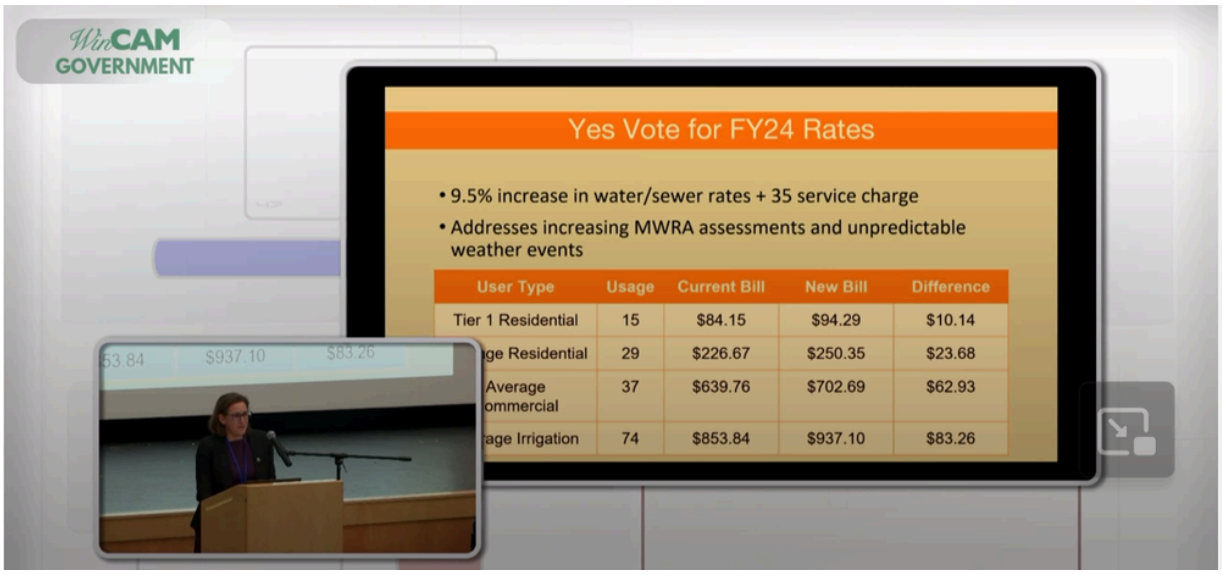
"We have an old master plan and a lot of changes coming up," said Pamela Cort, of precinct 5. "I don't see how we can go by data that is eight years old."

Town Meeting agreed, passing the measure in a landslide vote.

Water and sewer rates

Winchester residents will see their water and sewer rates going up 9.5%, with a service fee also going up $5. The fee last went up in 2021, increasing from $5 to $30.



Select Board member Anthea Brady discusses the upcoming increase in water and sewer rates at Town Meeting. WINCHESTER STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

Select Board member Anthea Brady made the presentation to Town Meeting, saying the weather had a lot to do with the increased rates. She said during hot summers, residents use more water while in wet years, the usage goes down.

Additionally, Brady said the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority installed new sewer meters to be more precise in its monitoring, which raised the town's annual assessment.

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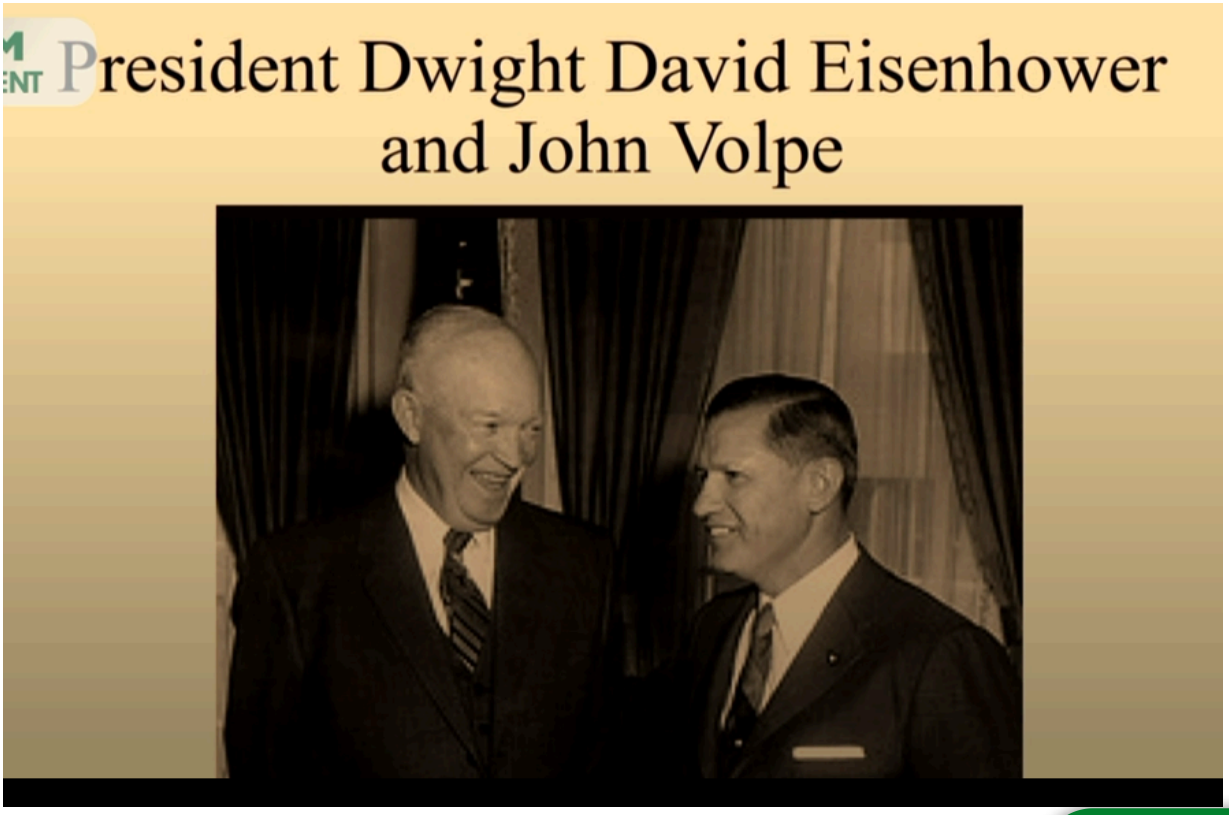
Town Manager Beth Rudolph added the MWRA has been installing the meters throughout its region and it happened to be Winchester's turn. She said the town will be looking at how to lower the amount of infiltration and inflow going into the system in order to keep the bills down.

Town Meeting voted 107 in the affirmative to raise the rates and 34 in the negative, with 5 abstentions.

Other business

The following three other articles were voted on during the May 2 Town Meeting:

Article 17: A non-binding citizens petition by Vincent Dixon to endorse the naming of the commuter rail station the John A Volpe Winchester Center Station.



President Dwight Eisenhower with former Mass. governor John Volpe. WINCHESTER STAFF PH
ESCOBAR COAKLEY

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Dixon said he had been working with the MBTA and put forth Senate bill 2259 to rename the station in honor of Volpe, a three-time Massachusetts governor, prominent businessman and Winchester resident.

Town Meeting members, however, said they were not in favor of the motion. One said he was "uncomfortable" with the idea there hadn't been a list of diverse names put forth while another pointed out there was only one place in Winchester named for a woman.

In the end, Town Meeting voted 107 against supporting the measure, with 31 in support and 6 abstaining.

Article 18: A measure to vote transferring money from Free Cash to supplement the Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

Among the items were $35,000 to employment compensation; $20,000 to Medicare tax; $24,755 from snow and ice equipment to snow and ice account; $44,695 from snow and ice personnel to snow and ice budget; and $14,106.10 to the reserve fund.

The measure passed unanimously.

Article 21: The adoption of the Capital Planning Committee's report.

A note was made that the committee will no longer be submitting its requests via the town's "yellow sheets." The items will now be listed as separate warrant items in order to provide more debate and greater transparency.

The measure was passed unanimously.

Town Meeting will reconvene for its third session on Monday, M
p.m. at Winchester High School. Live stream the meeting on WinCam.

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NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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NEWS

Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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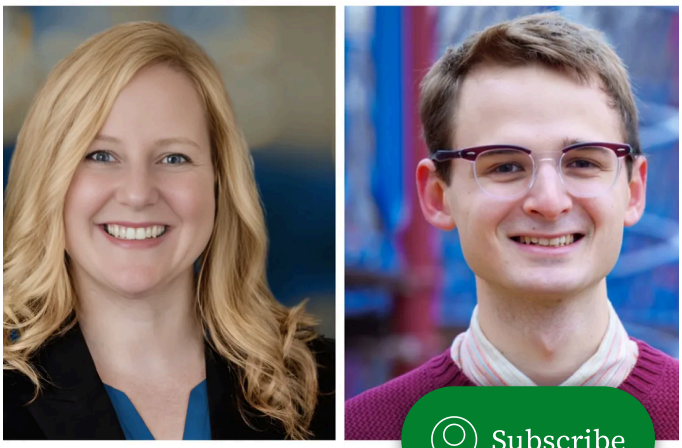

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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